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AUTHOR Singer, Robert N.
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ABSTRACT

In order to understand what motivates children to participate in or avoid engaging in physical activities, it is necessary to understand something about motivation. There are two sources of motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from drives, psychological and physiological processes, and needs such as the desire for achievement and self-determination. Extrinsic motivation comes from the expectation of rewards, either material or in the form of praise and admiration. The family structure and peer influences affect the kind of achievement needs the child will have. Some children will have such high achievement needs that they will persist at everything they try; others will vary their efforts greatly depending on the situation. Extrinsic rewards must be delicately handled because too many may undermine intrinsic motivation, while an appropriate level will complement and prop up low motivation. Attribution theory is also important to understand in studying motivation. Those who see the locus of control as outside of themselves, dependent on task difficulty or luck, will behave differently than those who feel there is an internal locus of control based on skill or effort. Involvement of children in physical activities can best be facilitated by offering them the maximum possible involvement and decision-making contribution to physical education programs. (CD)

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Psychosocial Factors in Activity Selection, Activity Perseverance, and Performance Achievement*

Robert N. Singer

Florida State University

The urge and the ability to achieve in sports is due in part to those many recognized and intangible processes that encompass the previous and present motivational states of the participant. Motivation is responsible for (1) the selection of and preference for some activity, (2) persistence at the activity, (3) intensity of and vigor of performance (effort), and (4) adequacy of performance relative to standards.

Motives have been classified as intrinsic or extrinsic, although it is recognized that both kinds operate in many situations. Intrinsic motivation is implied when the origin of the motive is from within a person; that is to say, he does something for its own sake (enjoyment, satisfaction, self-actualization). Extrinsic motivational sources include those associated with material gain (recognition, rewards, praise). It has often been expressed that intrinsic motivation is the more desirable of the two, for it may be a more sustained and effective form of motivation.

A number of alternative theoretical frameworks have been offered to explain the early development of intrinsic motivation. These include drive theory (manipulation drive, avoid boredom drive, exploratory drive, sensory drive); the search for optimal incongruity (psychological processes);

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the need for optimal arousal (physiological processes); and the quest to reduce environmental uncertainty and dissonance. A more recent cognitive and perceptual explanation of the early manifestations of intrinsic motivation is the need to be competent and self-determining in relation to one's environment. With development, the child's intrinsic motivation is differentiated into specific motives. Since it is commonly observed that children enjoy physical challenges, risk taking, and many forms of play, one might wonder about what factors tend to rechannel these energies to other types of activities and goals to the relative neglect of sports participation.

The need to achieve is important to consider with regard to specific motives. Competitive behavior is related to the need to achieve: achievement need is associated with a particular goal but no particular process or mode of operation; competitiveness refers to a goal sought through competitive situations. Need to achieve (in anything) is determined by rearing practices; e.g., when independence is stressed, achievement needs of children are higher. Cultural factors influence child rearing practices and in turn tendencies toward a high or lower need to achieve among peoples. The children of parents with a high need to achieve tend to display similar characteristics. As can be seen, the extent and direction of a child's motives are greatly determined within the family structure and other social circumstances.

Social learning theory helps to describe the development of a child's behavioral tendencies. Great significance is attached to modeling and reinforcement processes. Through the observation or imitation of family, peer group, or idol behaviors, the child responds and formulates attitudes, motives, and observable behavioral patterns. Social reinforcement is critical, as encouragement provided by either or both parents and

friends will help to extend interest and participation in certain activities. Social learning suggests the integration of the following processes:

Modeled behavior ⟶ Internalized processing ⟶ Right cues cause an attempt to emit this behavior ⟶ Performance is regulated by reinforcing outcomes (externally applied, self-administered, or vicariously experienced)

Motives, as such, constitute an aspect of personality dynamics. For many years, the trend in personality testing was to attempt to describe traits that were cross-situational in nature. That is to say, it was presumed that a person who revealed a high need to achieve in one situation would do so in other situations as well. It has also been proposed that situations dictate unique behaviors in persons. The controversy is partially resolved with a person X situation paradigm, where it is recognized that some individuals are remarkably consistent, others quite variable, from situation to situation. It is important to consider need to achieve and intrinsic motives in this light, with regard to sports or any other form of activity.

Considerations with regard to influences on motivation and in turn motivation on behavioral potential or actual performance have been well documented and schematized by Atkinson. Additionally, the central role of rewards and reinforcers in the shaping of behaviors has been detailed in research and is the focal point of behavioral theory (e.g., Skinner). Yet, it may be argued that the use or overuse and reliance on reward systems are not without potentially severe consequences. A conflict can arise between the development of intrinsic motivation and the use of extrinsic reinforcers. For instance, if applied, they can undermine instrinsic motivation. According to the overjustification hypothesis, which is suggested by self-perception theory, intrinsic interest in an activity

may be decreased by the inducement to engage in the activity for some extrinsic goal. Is this what happens to many children with regard to physical play and sports activities?

According to Rotter, a self-perceived internal locus of control (performance attributed to ability and effort) is necessary for intrinsic motivation. External causality (attributions to luck and task difficulty) is associated with extrinsic motivation. A change in perceived locus of causality from internal to external sources will diminish intrinsic motivation. These and other concepts have been incorporated into contemporary cognitive motivational theory, attribution theory, where causality and expectancies are related to task performance and achievement. Interest and success in sports may very well be associated with attributions and expectancies.

Yet, intrinsic sources of motivation may not always undermine intrinsic motivation. For one thing, the first may augment the second. Reinforcers can be effective for those people with poor motivation. They can be used to attract individuals to activities in which a low initial interest is shown. Secondly, it is highly probable that many athletes persevere at activities and accomplish due to intrinsic as well as extrinsic reasons.

However, for those individuals with a poor attitude toward and a low achievement motivation in regard to sports activities, the remedy may be in a better understanding of the characteristics of high need achievers and programs that can enhance this need. Analysis suggests that achievement motivation can be increased when participants (a) become more cognitively aware of goals and purpose of activities, (b) develop favorable attitudes, (c) have more of a role in setting personal goals, (d) help to determine

progress of activities to determine goals, (e) are provided with continual feedback as to performance levels and the degree of continuity between program activities and goal fulfillment, and in general, (f) are given more responsibility and decision making for their actions.

Interest in, perseverance at, and achievement in physical activities can be enhanced through an understanding of the development of motivational patterns in children and ways to continually activate intrinsic sources of motivation rather than to encourage dependence on reward systems. Our culture places a high premium on externally applied reinforcers to shape the behaviors of its members. More ideal would be the establishment of settings and programs that encourage inner direction toward physical activities, the realization of the value of these experiences, and the continual quest for self-fulfillment, self-realization, and challenges that can help us to realize out potential means of expression, skill, and enjoyment. Cognitive and affective behaviors must be tapped more often. External reinforcers, commands, and "blind" following would appear to be less desirable in the long run for these purposes.